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# *Australian* Garden HISTORY



PRODUCTIVE GROUND:  
AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS AND GARDEN HISTORY

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#### FRONT COVER

Wairoa [South Australia]  
Watercolour 1897  
Signed & dated W. Tibblts  
30.0 x 60.0 cms  
Collection of Marbury School,  
Aldgate



# Editorial

## their ENDEAVOURS are INVALUABLE

An interesting feature of the gardens at Versailles in the time of Louis XIV is often overlooked. In Le Nôtre's original design the section known today as the *Bosquet de la Reine* was the Labyrinth and it had a pedagogical purpose, suggested by Charles Perrault of fairy story fame. Inspired by the Jean de la Fontaine's translation of Aesop's Fables, the Labyrinth featured 39 fountains illustrating the fables using animals and birds fashioned in lead and painted in natural colours. Each group had an inscription explaining the moral of the story represented. To this place the formidable cleric Bossuet would bring the young Dauphin for entertainment and edification.

Unfortunately the statues and fountains were difficult to maintain and they gradually fell into disrepair. By 1778 the Labyrinth had given away to a *bosquet* in the fashionable English style. Fragments of the former garden can, however, still be seen in the Museum of the *Grande Ecurie* at Versailles as may the delightful paintings by Jean Cotelle which show the Labyrinth at the height of its glory.

In England, at Stowe after 1715, Lord Cobham also used his garden to instruct or, more accurately, promulgate a degree of satiric political propaganda for older, more sophisticated visitors. There is much Whiggish wit, wisdom and taste in the numerous temples of that great garden. That its fate after the First World War was to become the site of a great school is poetic justice.

Australia has no garden like Versailles, nor a school site like Stowe, but there are many interesting associations between schools and gardens in this country. There have also been those in schools, and from schools, who have contributed much to Australian gardening and its literature – Victor Crittenden, T.R. Garnett, Susan Irvine, Winifred Waddell and Winifred West to mention but a few.

Moreover contact with the natural landscape has often been given a place in the education of the young from the time of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and of Thoreau. We are seeing a renaissance of this interest in declared curricula and hidden curricula. VET or Vocational Education Training subjects like Horticulture and Agriculture can now be taken as part of formal assessment in the final years of secondary schooling. During the Middle School years many students spend a year in wilderness areas like the Mallacoota or Howqua regions, or time in a historic precinct like 'Wairoa' or 'Tay Creggan'. Teachers are also developing interesting courses focussing on plants, gardens and gardening history.

It is therefore not unexpected to find that Australia's Open Garden Scheme now includes school gardens in its listings. Visitors to these gardens will acknowledge the time, thought and work that sub-committees of school governing bodies give in a voluntary capacity to school gardens. Their endeavours, and those of innovative teachers, are invaluable for the future of Australia's gardens.

Nina Crone



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## MISSION

The Australian Garden History Society will be the leader in concern for and conservation of significant cultural landscapes and historic gardens through committed, relevant and sustainable action.

Thanks to Beryl Black, Nina Crone, Di Ellerton, Beverley & John Joyce, Laura Lewis, Cate McKern, Sandra Pullman and Georgina Whitehead for packing the last issue of the journal.

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THE MAN WHO GREW

# Wildflowers

by Ann Synan

DURING THE 1920s AND 1930s LETTERS from all over Australia and further afield, would arrive at Dutson in Gippsland, just a dot of a place, not even a township, nine miles south of Sale.

Thomas Alfred Robinson, standing by his dam at the Amidale, Dutson property.

This dam was filled using water from the Dutson Spring to irrigate his extensive fruit and vegetable gardens. The Robinson family also used this spring water as their swimming pool!

Photo source - Roma Metcalf (Synan Collection).

These letters were addressed 'To The Wildflower Man', 'Protea Man', or simply 'The Man Who Grows Wildflowers'. However addressed, they reached the man for whom they were intended – a truly remarkable man, Thomas Alfred Robinson.

He was a small man, with boundless energy, an inquiring mind and an impassioned love of plants. Moreover he held many ideas far ahead of his time. Central to Robinson's theories was his belief that plants could be grown prolifically and productively using a minimal amount of water. Contrary to the popular view of his day that native plant species could not be grown out of their natural environment, Robinson propagated plants indigenous to his own area and many others from seed gathered during his travels to distant parts of Australia.

Members of the Robinson family in the garden at Chorizema, taken in the 1920s. Woman on left is holding a large magnolia bloom. Mrs Clara Robinson in hat and veil, T A Robinson on right. The Chinese Windmill Palm (*Trachycarpus fortunei*) in the foreground remains in the garden today, now a large and mature plant.

Photo source - Roma Metcalf (Synan Collection).

His vision included the commercial cultivation of wildflowers, the production of vegetables as a commercial enterprise in the Dutson area, radical ideas for agricultural education, and a plan for the beautification of the Sale Canal. Many people sought his opinion on a range of botanical and agricultural issues and for much of his life he was a prominent enthusiast and active member of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria.

Thomas Alfred Robinson was born at Collingwood in 1852, educated at Melbourne Church of England Grammar School and began teaching, first in Brighton and then in Wangaratta. He played football for St Kilda and enjoyed bushwalking. Robinson married Clara Paten at Emerald Hill in 1881, and over subsequent years had seven children.

In 1889 the Education Department sent Robinson to teach at Dutson State School No. 2368, a tiny school serving a district south east of Sale. This typical one-teacher school catered for the children of surrounding farms. For a short time Robinson was instructed to fill, part-time, the position of head teacher at Stradbroke, a school which he reached by a daily ride of 20 miles each way over sandy tracks through bushland.

By 1891 Robinson was made head teacher at Dutson, a position he held for the next 14 years. His pupils, like school children throughout Victoria, celebrated special occasions such as Empire Day and Arbour Day when Robinson encouraged them to tend gardens and plant trees.

To-day a visit to the site of the Dutson State School gives few indications of the former school, or of the gardening skills of its teacher. A pumping station for the Latrobe Valley Outfall Sewer line





now occupies the land on the corner of Dutson Road and Johnson's Road. However, a walk around the area reveals remnants of the unusual plantings that once surrounded the school. The most notable tree is a Cork Oak (*Quercus suber*), twisted and gnarled, and with so much of its corky bark torn away by vandals over many years that it has been fenced off for protection. Varieties of pines, cedars, other oaks and eucalypts remain further into the school site, while clumps of bulbs push through the earth in springtime, and vines cover the ground.<sup>2</sup>

In 1889, after purchasing 400 acres of nearby land, the Robinsons moved out of the schoolhouse. Known as 'Armidale' the new property was rich in lime deposits and included a lime kiln and works, managed for many years by Mrs Robinson – but that is not part of this story.

Continuing his teaching, Robinson began to grow vegetables on land described as 'poor and hungry looking sand'. It was light heath country and Robinson believed that beautiful and productive plants could be grown there, provided the ground was well fertilised with manure and well tilled. People looked on these ideas with great scepticism but Robinson still planted his vegetables and flowers. He planted vines and an orchard with peach, apricot, apple and orange trees. They all thrived. Local newspapers gave descriptions of his produce, almost in awe at its size as Robinson won prize after prize at the local agricultural shows.<sup>3</sup>

His fruit and vegetables were sold locally in Sale. At every opportunity, Robinson promoted the idea of a large-scale production of vegetables at Dutson arguing that they could be sold at a handsome profit to the people of Sydney. Such an enterprise, he maintained, would prove successful if his principles of farm management were followed.<sup>4</sup>

In 1892 there was wide newspaper reportage of a proposal to construct a canal from the Latrobe

River across morass land to Dutson and Robinson spoke in strong support of this, seeing it as a means of transporting produce to waiting markets. The plans did not come to fruition although it is interesting to note that, more than a century later, a large scale, multi-million dollar vegetable growing business is now well established at Longford only a few kilometres away. It takes advantage of the same light, sandy soil conditions that Robinson had believed could be productive for commercial vegetable growing.

The State Education Department took a dim view of a teacher supplementing his income with a farming venture, so in 1904, Robinson resigned and from that time on he threw all his energies into his horticultural interests.<sup>5</sup> He purchased another piece of land adjoining 'Armidale' calling it 'Chorizema' and changed his horticultural focus.

Robinson now began to experiment with the propagation of native plant species. Again he was flying in the face of the commonly held view that native plants were difficult to grow. He believed otherwise. He built a modest cottage at 'Chorizema' and added other rooms and a verandah across the front at a later date. Robinson had carefully chosen the land, sited on a rise a mile or so from the Dutson Road. He is reported to have 'tested' various locations in the district by placing small vials of water in many locations, to ensure an area free of frosts for his plants.<sup>6</sup>

The earliest photograph of Robinson's cottage at Chorizema, Dutson, showing Robinson and friend Mrs Trewin sitting on the cottage front step. *Watsonia* and other plants can be seen in the foreground.

Photo source - Roma Metcalf (Synan Collection)



below left: Dolly Robinson and mother Clara in the garden at Armidale, Dutson, taken early 1920s.

Photo source - Roma Metcalf (Synan Collection).

below: Family group at the cottage at Chorizema, which now has its verandah. Taken around 1930. T A Robinson 2<sup>nd</sup> from left.

Photo source - Roma Metcalf (Synan Collection).





Generally considered 'a poor and sandy place' the native vegetation consisted of *Banksia serrata*, *Melaleuca* ssp., *Eucalyptus viminalis* and some stringybarks. Beneath the trees a host of tiny dry-country wildflowers and orchids flourished.

Robinson travelled widely visiting places like Mount Buffalo and Western Australia, always studying the native flora and gathering seed, which he brought home and germinated. He also exchanged seeds and plants with people from the Melbourne Botanic Gardens. Family members recall, over many years, dishes and pots of seed set on windowsills or beside the fire to germinate.<sup>7</sup>

Along both sides of the track to his house Robinson planted a wide avenue using Western Australian flowering gums (*Eucalyptus ficifolia*), marri (*E. calophylla*) and *Angophora costata*. They made an unforgettable blaze of orange-red for visitors to 'Chorizema' and remnants of this avenue can be seen today. Robinson also became interested in growing plants and bulbs from South Africa, including varieties of protea, which were ideally suited to conditions at Dutson.

Local folklore has it that these plants were brought back following the Boer War, and many people repeat this story which holds a certain romance. To date there is not evidence to validate any family connection with that conflict. Robinson himself did not go. It can only be concluded that following that war plants from South Africa

became fashionable and proved to suit local conditions. They certainly flourished at 'Chorizema' and to this day, many small and unusual South African bulb species continue to pop up in sheltered places in this garden.

A member of both the Advisory Committee and the Farm Committee of the newly established Sale Agricultural High School, Robinson had innovative ideas for agricultural education. In 1917 these brought him into conflict with Mr Greenwood, Inspector of Schools. In lengthy correspondence Robinson suggested that the farming courses run by the Education Department were not practical enough. He proposed that pupils should work on neighbouring farms and should receive payment. He also advocated that older boys should spend some time on farms in other districts, and that after graduating boys, then aged 18 or 19, should be given a farm, stock, implements and a house free of rent for two years. Inspector Greenwood responded tersely, stating emphatically that education finished at age 14 and there was no need for boys to work in every district in Victoria, as they would only be returning to work family farms.<sup>8</sup>

In 1921, Robinson put forward a proposal to the Sale Borough Council, offering to beautify a stretch of land along the bank of the Sale Canal two miles south of the town. His plan, supported by the Sale Horticultural Society and later by the local branch of the ANA (Australian Natives' Association), involved clearing the Canal banks for ten chains on either side of Goat Island. Planting was to include wattles and eucalypts which would flower continuously during spring and summer and offer different colours and scents. Robinson also suggested changing the name of Goat Island to 'Floral Island.'<sup>9</sup>

Eventually the council entrusted him with the area. The Mayor of Sale, Tom Cullinan, planted the first tree, a Norfolk Island Pine (*Araucaria heterophylla*), on Arbour Day 1921 and declared the park to be 'Robinson Park'. This little park received ongoing support and issues relating to it continued to be a source of correspondence between Robinson and the council for the next two decades and concerned items such as the supply of a pump, fencing, mowing and rabbit control. The Sale Borough Council in 1923 and again in 1926 sent letters of appreciation to T.A. Robinson for the appearance of the park and for his ongoing interest in its welfare. In 1927 the Garden Committee erected a 'Robinson Park' signboard.<sup>10</sup> Regrettably that sign has been lost and although a few of Robinson's trees remain along the canal bank, Floral Island has now reverted to native scrub.

Cork Oak (*Quercus suber*) on the site of the Dutson State School. The tree has been fenced following long term vandal damage to its bark from people 'souveniring' pieces of cork. There is a smaller cork oak on a part of the Chorizema property that is now privately owned.

Photo source: Ann Synan





As Robinson's own garden became established, he began to exhibit and sell his wild flowers. He won prizes at the local agricultural show for them. More triumphantly, in 1938 his wildflowers gained recognition at the prestigious Melbourne Wildflower Show hosted by the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria, where that year, another exhibitor and judge was Gippsland botanist Jean Galbraith.<sup>11</sup> He sold bulbs to Melbourne nurseries and enthusiasts began to visit the garden at 'Chorizema'.

He also started to sell other flowers commercially, transporting them carefully by train to Melbourne. A *Magnolia grandiflora*, 30 years old in 1927 and with a trunk stated to measure 8 feet in circumference, is reported to have produced prolific, strongly scented blooms 'as large as the top of a bucket'. Flowers from a Lira-o-Dendron [sic] or tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) were regularly sent in large quantities to Melbourne florists season after season.<sup>12</sup>

Long-time supporters of the Sale Horticultural Society, Robinson and his wife became involved in the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria, hosting visits to the garden at 'Chorizema'. Their daughter Dolly continued this tradition for many years after her father's death at the age of 91. The obituary written by Frederick Chapman in 1943 for the journal of the Field Naturalists Club evidenced publicly the high regard the Club had for this Gippsland horticultural pioneer<sup>13</sup> and a personal letter of condolence was sent to the Robinson family.<sup>14</sup>

Dolly, who also had a love of plants and the garden, continued to live on at 'Chorizema'. She planted more proteas and sold her flowers to Melbourne florists until 1966 when she sold out to Irene and Les Merrick who maintained the enterprise for a number of years before the 'protea farm' was bought by the present owners, James and Annette Frew. Under their management the



property has developed as the *Australian Wildflower Company*, a successful floriculture export business sending a wonderful variety of Australian wildflowers to markets all over eastern Australian and to other parts of the world.

Although much modified T. A. Robinson's cottage remains on the property. Visitors to the garden can still see remnants of the flowering-gum drive and elements of Robinson's garden notably a small, but old, cork oak (*Quercus suber*), a spectacular coral tree (*Erythrina* sp.) and a *Gardenia thunbergii* which the Frew family says is rare outside the Melbourne Botanic Gardens. Sadly the celebrated magnolia and liriodendron are long gone.

Chinese Windmill Palm (*Trachycarpus fortunei*) in the garden of the cottage at Chorizema in 1999. This can be seen as a younger plant in an earlier photograph of the cottage.

Photo source: Ann Synan

Ann Synan lives in a 1920s house in Sale and describes herself as a passionate gardener and addicted reader of gardening books and magazines. A longstanding commitment to history, particularly local and medical history fills any other spare time. She was co-author of a book on the history of the Gippsland Base Hospital, has written several articles for the *Gippsland Heritage Journal*, and is currently researching post-World War II European migration to the Gippsland area.

Thanks for generous help in providing source material for this article go to Peter Synan for archival material, to Roma McLeod, (grand-daughter of T.A. Robinson), for family photographs and stories, to Ellen Lyndon for notes on the Robinson family, to James and Annette Frew for information and access to their garden and to Irene Merrick for information and news clippings relating to her time at 'Chorizema'.

The *Australian Wildflower Company* is a commercial enterprise and is not open to the public.

- 1 *Gippsland Times*, 20/5/1891, also *Morwell Historical society Newsletter*, Vol. No. 1, 10/2/1970, a transcription of the list of schools in the Traralgon Inspectorate, East Section, pp.3-4
- 2 Dutson school site visit by the author, 14/03/1999.
- 3 *Gippsland Mercury*, 3/3/1892 and 20/8/1892
- 4 *Gippsland Mercury* 20/8/1892 and 11/10/1892
- 5 Personal recollection, Jean Matthews, 1999
- 6 Personal recollection, Agnes Vale to C. Newnham and to James Frew
- 7 Personal recollection, Roma Metcalf, September 1999

- 8 Education Department Archives, held by the Public Records Office, Victoria
- 9 *Gippsland Times* 9/6/1921, and also 18/7/1921
- 10 *Borough of Sale Rate Book 1924-1927*, various references held by the Sale Historical Society.
- 11 'Wild Nature Show Report' in *The Victorian Naturalist*, Vol. LV, No. 8, Dec. 7 1938 pp. 130-131, and also *Gippsland Times*, 17/10/1938
- 12 *Gippsland Times*, 14/2/1927
- 13 *The Victorian Naturalist*, Vol. LX, May 1943, p.8. See also *Gippsland Times* 29/4/1943
- 14 Letter from Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria dated 28/4/1943, to Mr H. Robinson, Dutson, in the author's possession.





# Partners

## WAIROA and MARBURY

'WAIROA' IN THE ADELAIDE HILLS, just beyond Aldgate, is a remarkable garden for several reasons. It represents the cream of South Australian hill station gardens.

Detail of design in the  
iron stairs  
Photo: Nina Crone

It offers a fascinating slice of South Australia's social history during the period 1890-1960 under the successive ownerships of William Austin Horn, Tom and Mary Elder Barr Smith, and Sir James and Lady Joanna Gosse. And, from the perspective of garden design, it is a splendid example of gardener George Sparrow's talents and dedication.

In 1965 'Wairoa' found itself on the property market facing an uncertain future. By 1972 it acquired a very different type of owner in Marbury School. Founded by the progressive educationist Margaret Langley, Marbury had been established as a small alternative school in the Adelaide suburb of Wayville the previous year.

Although conservatives might have regarded the school's somewhat gypsy-like character with some qualms, flexibility and adaptability were typical of Margaret Langley. Her parents had reared her to have little concern 'for possessions, for material security, for things'. Their concerns were 'the truth, the right path, the compelling argument, the commitment to a cause, loyalty to fellow travellers and the courage to do battle with the opposition.'

Imbued with a sense of social activism Margaret was attuned to living, thinking and acting outside the mainstream. Her own pattern of schooling had not followed the traditional model. Through the education of her own children at 'Preshil', a non-conformist progressive school in Melbourne, Margaret came in contact with the work and ideas of Margaret Lyttle and these impressed her. When she moved to Adelaide with her husband, a family psychiatrist, the opportunity to establish her own school offered itself. She had no doubts about her future work.

Margaret Langley's educational philosophy appealed to Burwell and Joyce Dodd who had an

interest in progressive education and the financial resources necessary to establish the school at Wayville and to purchase the 'Wairoa' estate. The Burwell family commitment to Marbury and 'Wairoa' has continued into the next generation through the practical involvement of Ian and Kirsty Dodd.

The fact that Marbury was a small, independent school meant it had the capacity to interact sympathetically and relatively speedily with a heritage site in a way which larger, more traditional schools concerned with facilities for sport and formal academic results would find more difficult.

Yet there were realities to be faced. Accommodation needed to be built for junior school students. The 'Wairoa' buildings, where the senior school was located, had deteriorated badly, and the conservation and maintenance of the heritage garden had to be considered. Careful stewardship and planning were essential. In 1994 the Commonwealth Government, through the Cultural Heritage Projects program, supported a Conservation Study. This assistance greatly encouraged Margaret Langley who was a committed gardener and historian. However by 1998 it was evident that Margaret was terminally ill and she died that year.

The following year the school's board of governors commissioned Dr David Jones from Adelaide University to undertake a Landscape Conservation Study of the 'Wairoa' garden, while a separate report on Buildings and Structures was prepared by Greenway International Architects. Dr Jones submitted his comprehensive study and recommendations in December 1999 in time for the school to apply for further government financial assistance to enable such prosaic elements of garden restoration as drainage, roadways and car parks to be undertaken.



*The garden is considered of national importance, and an important exemplar of the work of George Sparrow. It exhibits the characteristics of a Victorian hill-station garden in the Adelaide Hills and includes a stone-edged carpet bedding configuration, various vernacular sculpture features, a grotto and a pool, and garden artefacts from the 1885-1910 period.*



THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE AUSTRALIA

'Wairoa' Conservation Study Landscape Assessment Report H: Historic Garden and Arboretum Layout Plan 1:200

Margaret Langley had seen the property as a challenge to maintain but also as an opportunity to create a larger school complex that drew its meaning from the environment. From all accounts she sought to facilitate the on-going restoration of the 100-year-old garden, and although she planted a number of trees and rhododendrons she made little change to the historic garden and arboretum.

A present member of the Board of Governors at 'Marbury', Ann Herraman has a sympathetic and a realistic view of the future maintenance of the 'Wairoa' garden. In some schools she might be described as the Development Director, the person responsible for seeking financial support for particular projects. She is under no illusion that the finances needed for maintaining a garden of this calibre can be met from school fees. Other sources of funds for garden work must be found. Bequests, donations, special grants and income from the use of the garden by the general public are possible sources. Costs of some garden work can be reduced thanks to volunteer groups such as the 'Friends of Wairoa'.

In all respects the value of a professional Conservation Analysis and Management Plan cannot be underestimated. Ann Herraman considers it is the first thing any owner of a recently acquired historic garden should do. Among other things, the Conservation Analysis will give a full account of the development of the garden, often describing in detail the contribution of previous owners. It will assess the design, the artefacts and garden structures, the state of drainage and watering systems and identify the significant features of plantings and their botanical importance. Thus it is a ready reference for knowing and describing the garden and for interpreting it to lay people.

The Management Plan offers a systematic way of organising future work, enabling those responsible

for the garden to plan capital and recurrent budgets. If financial assistance is being sought from government or philanthropic sources, a Conservation Analysis and Management Plan is virtually mandatory.

David Jones identified the six key areas of 'Wairoa' as the Historic Garden and Arboretum, the Main Residence and Outbuildings area, the Picking Garden and its environs, the Driveway and Plantations, the Outer Property Grounds, and the Pine Street Allotment. He then considered each in terms of History, Landscape Design Traits, Analysis, Design Intents, Objectives and Policies.

It is the area classified as the Historic Garden and Arboretum that immediately impresses the visitor. There one finds the most significant elements of the garden, notably the spatial design and layout effected by George Sparrow, the first Head Gardener. Sparrow, trained in England, had 'expertise and design interest in carpet bedding' as well as a signature style of setting rocks as borders

Plan of the Historic Garden area of 'Wairoa'

Courtesy of Dr David Jones

Vernacular sculpture by William Austin Horn in the garden at 'Wairoa'

Photo: Nina Crone







Stone work above the Grotto in the garden at 'Wairoa'

Photo: Nina Crone



The youngest students at 'Marbury' enjoy their sunflower garden

to garden beds. Further, he was a competent maker of rustic garden furniture.

Unusual cast iron steps lead down from the main drive into the historic garden where 'the use of stonework and the scale and intimacy of the spaces along the paths with the deep canopies of foliage and the coloured textured vegetation with its sparkles of flowers' create 'a magical space to disappear within, explore, and retreat'.

Ann Herraman explained that senior students may walk, read, draw, paint or just sit and talk in the heritage gardens. The more boisterous junior students have other extensive areas for hide-and-seek, cubby house building and organised sport.

Among the significant trees in the garden are a Soledad Pine (*Pinus torreyana*), a mature *Sequoiadendron giganteum*, a Parasol Pine/Japanese Umbrella Pine (*Sciadopitys verticillata*), and an *Ulmus glabra* 'Camperdownii'.

All these species are rare in South Australia.

The 'Friends of Wairoa' co-ordinated by Kirsty Dodd, daughter of Margaret Langley, have cleared the area around the grotto, and the rock-pool features. One can enter the grotto to see the wonderful scone-like planters with remnant *rocaille* decoration that must once have held small and filmy ferns. The vernacular sculptural relief work attributed to William Austin Horn adds a special quality to this unique part of 'Wairoa' which David Jones describes as 'an attractive and stimulating place of discovery [where] the sculptures add a sense of whimsy and interest.'

The grotto and rockery area overlook the lower lawn terraces which once accommodated the croquet lawn, the bowling green and the tennis court. They provide a counterpoint of level open space now used by the school for assembly areas. Croquet is still played on the recreational lawns and dance drama classes and supervised games are held on the old bowling lawn and tennis court.

The limited size of the school, currently 150 students, is an advantage for garden conservation in that fewer parents and staff require vehicle access and parking than is the case in most schools. Moreover, Ann Herraman re-iterates the school's new driveway was deliberately constructed to minimise soil compaction threatening a row of elms and oaks

which were planted at the end of the nineteenth century and are evident in the Tibbits painting.

New buildings such as the junior primary school, constructed in 1993, and the primary school (1994) were sited well away from the historic garden, arboretum and picking gardens. In their own way they contribute to the natural environment in that the youngest students now have an area surrounded with native species, and their own picking and vegetable garden producing sunflowers, zucchini, tomatoes and silver beet. The horticultural activities offer points of departure for other educational activities such as cooking, dietetics, artwork, craft-work, storytelling or geography, and splendidly exemplify the school's motto 'The Child is Father of the Man'. In mathematics classes, older students are encouraged to do computational exercises associated with the maintenance and renewal of bushland areas along the driveways and in the outlying perimeter sections of 'Wairoa'.

School management recognises that additional income can accrue from limited public use of the garden. It has recently produced a brochure characterising 'Wairoa' as 'an historic garden with elements of romantic intimacy and panoramic splendour', highlighting the 'elegant house with William Morris features' with consequently 'special value for weddings, parties, private celebrations, photography and gatherings.' In 1975 'Wairoa' was a location for the Australian film *Picnic at Hanging Rock*.

This interface between the school community and the general public can be a sensitive area. But Ann Herraman handles it adroitly and diplomatically, recognising the nature of a symbiotic relationship. She recounts how an agreement was reached with the Adelaide Hills Council whereby land from the school campus was licensed to the community for a bicycle track and council land on the perimeter of the school was licensed for car-parking and the construction of a Primary School soccer field.

After Robert Barr Smith purchased 'Wairoa' in 1894 he commissioned the artist William Tibbits to paint it. The picture depicted the garden in remarkable detail and is one of the few paintings Tibbits made of an Adelaide subject. It is now part of the Art Collection of Marbury School and it reminds students and staff at 'Wairoa' that they are indeed living with Australian history.

#### Further Reading:

David Jones 'Autumn Tints' in the Adelaide Hills: the Garden of 'Wairoa' *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, Number 28. 2000



# Visiting Cards

NEIL ROBERTSON, Chief Executive Officer for the Australian Open Garden Scheme, has kindly provided this list of school and college gardens open in the 2001-2000 season.

He writes 'The Scheme's Mission is to promote the knowledge and pleasure of gardens and gardening across Australia, and integral to this is an educational element. We see ourselves as educating the public in general in the art and science of gardening. This is done in quite a gentle way with our gardeners leading by example. Every year we open a certain number of dedicated educational institutions be they schools, universities and so on. However, in order to maintain a balanced program, we are unable to open anything like the number of these available to us.'

## SYDNEY

Newington College Preparatory School

OPEN 20-21 Oct 2001

A secluded retreat, this school within a garden offers a pleasant learning environment. The garden is designed to have something in flower all year, and plants must satisfy two or three attributes: colour, perfume and form. Winding paths reveal the Serpentine Walk with its rose arbour, a yellow corner with an unusual yellow camellia, and collections of species geraniums and hydrangeas.

## NORTHERN NSW

The Armidale School garden

OPEN 17-18 Nov 2001

Colourful well-designed gardens soften and enhance the imposing school buildings of dark Armidale brick. Through a lych-gate is the Chapel Garden where hellebores form a perennial background for wallflowers, aquilegias and California poppies. A nearby border is bright with delphiniums, foxgloves and Canterbury bells. The Lawrence Quadrangle is formally planted with roses and annuals

School of Natural & Complementary Medicine

OPEN 1-2 Sept 2001

Set in parkland with a large lake and surrounded by mature trees, this impressive medicinal plant collection offers fascinating insights into natural and complementary medicine. Raised timber beds overflow with aromatic native shrubs including callistemons, melaleucas, prostantheras and boronia. A central raised circular bed contains cottage plants such as heartsease, evening primrose and California poppies..

Wollongbar Campus of TAFE garden

OPEN 1-2 Sept 2001

The gardens of this important centre for horticultural education provide an excellent opportunity for gardeners to learn about a range of plants suited to the area and the chance to experience different garden designs. Numerous specialist areas include excellent conifer, palm and Australian collections, and extensive herb, rose and shade gardens set among spacious lawns.

## SOUTHERN NSW

St Clement's Retreat Centre

OPEN 6-7 Oct 2001

Now a Redemptorist Monastery, imposing Galong Castle was originally the homestead of Ned Ryan, one of the first settlers in the Galong district over a century ago. Privet hedging, large pines and the peppertrees along the driveway are survivors from the early garden. Stone outbuildings are a feature, as is the Marian Grotto built into the side of a hill. Extensive plantings in the adjacent cemetery have recently been restored.

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Wairoa

OPEN Sun 5 May 2002

Wealthy South Australians once established grand estates in the hills as a retreat from the summer heat. Designed for William Austin Horn around 1894, Wairoa is one of few to have survived intact. Winding paths, hydrangeas, perennials and extensive plantings of camellias and rhododendrons are set against a dramatic backdrop of huge conifers, maples, pin oaks and copper beeches.

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Curtin University gardens


OPEN 29-30 Sept 2001

Curtin University has quickly become one of the prominent horticultural landmarks in WA and Matthew Lunn will take guided tours through its many precincts. These include a mature Japanese garden; a native garden in full flower with over 40 varieties of grevillea ; a Mediterranean garden with an old cork tree; a shade garden with massed orange jessamine and cliveas; and open spaces where annual beds and manicured hedges reflect the architecture of the buildings.

NOTE – People intending to visit these gardens should check further details in the *Australian Open Garden Scheme Guidebook 2001-2002*. The publication will be available in August.







PAST AND PRESENT

# Meet IN GARDENS

IT IS GREATLY TO THE BENEFIT OF ALL interested in the grown landscape that Winifred West, founder of Frensham, Sturt and Gib Gate schools in Mittagong, NSW, was not only a progressive educator, but also a keen gardener.

by Sarah Cains

The Bricked Garden

Photo: Harold Cazneau.  
Plate 21 from *The Frensham Book*  
(Sydney, 1934) Rare Book Collection,  
State Library of Victoria

As a result of her energy and talent, the gardens at the schools are lasting examples of the Australian country garden in the English style. They were created in an era when plants were not easily procured and most garden work was done by hand, and though modern times have necessitated changed management of the gardens, the schools today continue their tradition of progressive education in an unusually lovely grown landscape.

It was no accident that, on arriving from England, Miss West chose to establish her school in an area where a cool temperate climate, rich soil and a generous rainfall are well suited to the establishment of exotic gardens. Miss West and her friend, Miss Phyllis Clubbe, began their Australian enterprises by founding Frensham, a secondary boarding school for girls, in 1913. In 1941 and 1954 respectively they added Sturt Craft Centre and Gib Gate primary school. The two women became central figures in a vital and creative community, which extended its influence throughout the Southern Highlands and beyond.

Because of their placement in time the majority of people at Frensham in the early years were women. Then, years of war resulted in restraints in many areas, one of which was transport, so few left Mittagong for weekends or holidays. The fact that most staff lived in or close to the schools made for a stable and constant community which considered the schools as their home.

The Frensham garden, the first to be established, was created by this dedicated band of women as a place of beauty in which learning took place. From the beginning beautiful surroundings have been central to the life of the school. Garden lessons, performances, celebrations and picnics have always had an important role in school life and sheltered hideaways were designed into the garden as spaces for relaxation. School friends still pick flowers from the gardens to weave coronets worn for a day by 'birthday girls'.

The colours of Frensham's uniform were chosen to bring to mind the beautiful and hardy iris flower, the school's emblem: brown for the earth, the green of leaves and an occasional dash of purple for splendour. The highest award attainable for a student is an iris picked from the garden and presented to acknowledge service and achievement in a field of endeavour.

Interest groups and clubs were established in those early days for the pleasure of shared learning and to develop talent. The Gardening Club was amongst these. That it enjoyed the same status as The Pen and Ink Club, The Literary and Dramatic Society, The Music Club and other such groups is a measure of the value placed on the art of gardening by Miss West and her colleagues. Through these clubs, staff, students and community members were together involved in creative activities that filled many hours when classroom lessons were finished.

In 1938 Miss West resigned as Headmistress of Frensham. At fifty-seven, she still had many years ahead for new projects and the first to benefit from her ongoing creative energy was Sturt Craft Centre.

Miss West and Miss Clubbe moved into their first real home in Mittagong in 1947. Architect



and friend, John Moore, who had been responsible for much of the built landscape of the schools, designed Sturt Cottage, an unpretentious weatherboard house for them. The Sturt garden grew up with the cottage at its centre. The new garden benefited not only from the fact that Miss West now had more time, but also from experience gained in the Frensham garden.

Many would say that this garden, with its more detailed layout, is the most beautiful of the three school gardens. Entered through an elegant pergola erected to commemorate the service and friendship of John Moore, it leads the visitor through a number of serene planted spaces graced by notable pieces of craftwork.

It is easy to imagine the stimulating life which thrived around the schools in those early days, and it is no surprise that so many ex-students of Frensham are themselves keen gardeners and that the school gardens are, to this day, treasured by the Winifred West community.

Flower beds in the cottage style, perennial borders and formal gardens were established, worked and loved by Miss West's enthusiastic work force, but as years passed, lifestyles changed. Improvements in transport and communications have meant that staff no longer need live at Frensham. As more of the school community developed lives outside the school, as well as within it, the extent and planting style of the gardens became a burden for maintenance.

In 1994 a committee comprising three ex-students (all trained horticulturists), the property manager and the school warden, was formed to work in co-operation with school management on caring for the gardens. A professional horticulturist was employed as Head Gardener and work began on restoring, rationalising and replanting.

From the outset the committee agreed that the English style should be retained in established garden areas but it also recognised that change is integral to good garden management. The dynamic of a small workforce and three large gardens made it essential that new plantings require less maintenance.

At first these decisions were greeted with caution by some of the school community. Many regretted the passing of the rambling informal style of the garden, but as the new plantings began to take shape, confidence has returned and the garden is again giving pleasure to friends old and new. Most importantly, the students love their gardens and want to be actively involved with them.

In the light of modern horticultural knowledge, many 'old friends' are now considered to be environmental weeds. Honeysuckle, ivy, cotoneaster, pyracantha, bamboo, willow and pine

are being removed together with over-mature plants and others that have outgrown their spaces. Replacement plants are selected for site suitability, hardiness, colour, texture and fragrance. Wherever suitable, Australian plants are being included to provide food and habitat for wildlife and to encourage native birds. A special planting of grevilleas has been placed beneath the windows of the music centre.

Wherever practical the shapes of original gardens are retained. One of the first of these areas to receive attention was the Bricked Garden, a favourite spot created by Miss West at the bottom of the main Frensham lawn. Originally planted with perennials, it had become completely overrun with weeds, but its particular association with the schools' founder made renovation a controversial project.

The site was cleaned and replanted. In a restrained colour scheme, predominantly of green and white, Chinese star jasmine was chosen to fill an old wire frame that screens the area from the driveway. Existing flat, geometric spaces of the layout were filled with an evergreen ground-covering daisy and trimmed box hedges surrounded a massed planting of white-flowering hebe to provide a middle height feature. Eight koelreuteria trees have been placed symmetrically to give light shade. They display yellow flowers in summer and interesting papery fruit with leaf colour in autumn.

Because of its weed status, it was necessary to replace the old hawthorn hedge that screened the garden from the lawn. Two friends of the garden took cuttings from a hearty escallonia plant at Gib Gate and drove them to Mt. Wilson where a talented ex-Frensham student nursery-woman grew them into the plants that now form a new flowering evergreen hedge.

Such was the community's enthusiasm for the restored garden that money was spontaneously given to purchase the hand-crafted armillary

The English Lesson

Photo: Harold Cazneau.  
Plate 59 from *The Frensham Book*  
(Sydney, 1934) Rare Book Collection,  
State Library of Victoria







*'Children should be brought up to love beauty as they do other virtues - especially in a country where the tendency is to be utilitarian and to give beauty a very low place in the scale of things necessary or desirable. Beauty must have a great effect on our development . . .'*

Miss Winifred West on the occasion of Frensham's fourth birthday in June, 1917.

top: Gardening  
Photo: Harold Cazneaux.  
Plate 60 from *The Frensham Book*  
(Sydney, 1934) Rare Book Collection,  
State Library of Victoria

above: Elinor's Garden  
Photo: Harold Cazneaux.  
Plate 22 from *The Frensham Book*  
(Sydney, 1934) Rare Book Collection,  
State Library of Victoria

sphere that had been selected as a centrepiece. Symbolising the link between art and science, it is designed and calibrated especially for its Mittagong site.

The next projects were the building of a new pathway to link the Bricked Garden to the main school area and the re-introduction of a long departed border beside the lawn. In keeping with a policy of placing flowering and fragrant plants in areas most frequented by the girls, the bed was filled with shrubs and trees that are at their best during term time. It quickly became obvious that the pathway to the dining room was the best place for more beds of perennials, flowering bulbs and roses!

The plethora of garden ornaments now so freely available puts community gardens at risk of becoming over decorated. Effort is being made to follow the example of the Sturt garden where management selects objects of artistic worth for filling the limited number of spaces where accent is needed. Because of this policy, garden "givers" are encouraged to donate money rather than selected items. Though this may sound overbearing, it helps to avoid offending well-meaning friends and it facilitates adherence to a management plan for

the gardens. A Garden Book, itself a fine example of the bookbinder's craft, is kept in an honoured place to record gifts to the garden.

Beyond the exotic garden, unique environmental projects are available for students in regenerating the important bushland area belonging to the school, restoring stream banks and monitoring water quality in the Nattai Creek which flows through Frensham on its way to become part of Sydney's water supply.

Although many plants are yet small, new shrub borders, cool, formal plantings, young trees and Australian plants are combining quickly with older, established plantings to ensure that students at Winifred West Schools will continue to live and learn in beautiful surroundings as planned for them by their schools' founder.

Students, staff and the wider community of Winifred West Schools now feel certain that Miss West with her commitment to beauty, learning and progress, would be enthusiastic about the changes in her gardens.

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Sarah Cains lives in Mittagong. She is a gardener, a writer and a friend of Winifred West Schools.



## Frances Elisabeth Rosemary Lincoln

PUBLISHER

REMEMBERED AT SOMERVILLE COLLEGE, OXFORD, as a striking figure in dark glasses, enormous hats and designer subfusc, Frances was reminiscent of Vita Sackville-West to whom she was distantly related. She will be similarly remembered by some at international book fairs. A quiet, unassuming shyness coupled with a keen intellect and deep passion for her work.

At the age of 27, Frances began publishing full colour books in an old piano factory in Kentish Town and soon attracted the finest garden writers including Tony Lord, Penelope Hobhouse, Rosemary Verey, Roy Strong and countless others. Much loved, absorbing books such as *Monet's Garden*, *Christopher Lloyd Gardener Cook*, *Sissinghurst*, *Edith Wharton's Italian Gardens*, *Charleston*, *The Bold & Brilliant Garden*, the Hobhouse and Verey classics, and the Royal Horticultural Society Diaries grace many Australian book shelves.

In these days of coffee-table books mass produced by multi-national conglomerates, Frances's standards will be profoundly missed. Her books were works of art and painstakingly produced. She herself was a superb editor. Photography, design and production standards were always excellent and the cost of production, a secondary consideration.

On one occasion when I congratulated her upon the publication of *Beth Chatto's Gravel Garden* she replied, "yes, it's a real book". The emphasis was squarely upon the real. She was very much a "real" person, always, and her passion for creativity and excellence will be very sorely missed wherever books are read.

Frances died, much too young, of pneumonia, while holidaying in the Lake District, England.

Warwick Forge

*Jalete*

## Margaret Hendry, OAM

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

MARGARET HENDRY, DISTINGUISHED LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT, died in Canberra recently, after a long illness. The Australian Garden History Society was one of many groups that benefited from her generous support.

Her interest in gardens started as a young child, and she recalled chastisement for wearing her best shoes to garden. In later life she clearly remembered the nasturtiums, marigolds, mirror bush and rose, which grew by the tiled path to her house. Later, when a student at Burnley Horticultural College, part-time work in some of Edna Walling's Toorak gardens enabled her to buy the first edition of Walling's *Gardens in Australia*.

Encouraged by the garden designer Millie Gibson, she saved enough by gardening six days a week to study landscape at Kings College, Durham University. After graduation she spent four years working with Dame Sylvia Crowe, one of the foremost architects of the era, and they remained friends thereafter. In England she became interested in the work of Gertrude Jekyll as had Edna Walling before her. In an article a couple of years ago in the

Journal she pointed out Jekyll's influence in both America and Australia.

Although her research into the changing landscape around Canberra, from 1834 to 1997, came largely from government documents, her writing brought them to life and gave insight into the significant patterns of exotic planting in the area.

Love of roses and their Australian history was a favourite topic. With her usual determination she worked for the revival of the rose gardens around old Parliament House in Canberra, and in 1998 came the promise of government funding for over seven thousand roses for the precincts. Another idea she cherished was that of an exhibition of the work of Crowe, Jekyll and Walling at the National Gallery in Canberra.

Through her articles for *Australian Garden History* Margaret added greatly to the appreciation and interpretation of garden history. Her work was meticulous, interesting and often original. In her personal life she is remembered with gratitude for her encouragement and help to those in professional life.

Phyl Simons

### *English* GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY 20th May – 8th June 2002

Following the success of the 'Gardens of Australia' Tour which the AGHS organised for members of the English Garden History Society in 1998, there will be an inaugural 21-day tour of gardens in England and Scotland organised by the GHS for our members.

The Tour begins in London with a visit to the Chelsea Flower Show as guests of GHS members. From London the itinerary moves to Somerset, Wales and north to the lowlands of Scotland ending in Edinburgh. Gardens to be visited include major gardens, important public gardens, and private gardens - large and small.

Further details will appear in the next issue of the Journal. Expressions of interest should be directed to:

**Ann Cripps** 2002 Tour Co-ordinator tel: 03 6225 1860 email: anncripps@hotmail.com



# Tay CREGGAN



by Sandra Pullman

Tay Creggan from the  
main drive

Photo: from Strathcona school archives  
by courtesy Mrs Dianne Little

**TAY CREGGAN IS A HISTORIC PROPERTY** situated on the Yarra River in Hawthorn. The land was originally part of Sir James Palmer's estate, sub-divided by George Coppin after Sir James's death in 1871.

The architect, Robert Guyon Purchas designed and built the house for himself in 1891. Now classified by the National Trust, the mansion is described as 'picturesque Elizabethan Revival style', popular in England in the early nineteenth century. It is unclear whether Purchas designed it himself, or copied it from an early architectural pattern book, or based it on an Italian chateau that impressed him during his Grand Tour of Europe in the 1870s.

Unfortunately, Purchas never finished the house due to financial difficulties experienced in 1893 with the onset of economic recession. The Hawthorn Ratebooks show that a broker, Mr Montague Pym occupied the house in 1894-95. About two years later Purchas sold the property to Ida Carter, who then sold it to Michael and Flora Spencer in 1898. While Michael Spencer was in England, he died in an accident in the family shipyards at Newcastle-on-Tyne. In 1901 Flora

Spencer married Alfred McKean, a solicitor, and the couple commissioned renovations while they were away on a 7-year honeymoon.

When the property became known as Tay Creggan is unclear. It is highly likely that it was named during the Spencer/McKean period but it may have been named by the Mortills<sup>2</sup> who purchased it in 1926. The name Tay Creggan is Gaelic meaning 'built on a rock'. After 1938/39 when the Mortills sold the property to the Catholic Church for use as a residential education centre for young women, it was known as The Grail. When Strathcona Baptist Grammar School purchased the site in 1969 the name reverted to Tay Creggan.

The garden style is 'picturesque' and some of the original layout is still intact. There is a fine, almost complete, row of *Cupressus torulosa* running down to the river along the eastern boundary. To-day these trees dominate the skyline, blocking out the



surrounding houses in Hawthorn and enclosing the garden to create a feeling of seclusion. A line of *Ulmus* sp. follows the course of the river boundary.

The house is built at the top of the slope with its entrance covered in Boston ivy (*Parthenocissus tricuspidata*) and a path, or minor service drive, surrounds it. There have been some alterations to the main service drive and a minor drive (between the house and the Camberwell railway line) which used to lead down to the old stables and glasshouse, demolished in the late 1930s to make room for extensions to the house. The asphalt surfaces have been replaced by cement.

It seems that the original entrance to the property has been altered by construction of a circular driveway cut into the garden bed on the western side to create an island bed containing an early planting of *Cordyline australis*, an *Escallonia* sp. and some old camellias. Photographs prior to the 1930s show two eucalypts overhanging either side of the main drive but these have since been removed.

Looking down the driveway towards the house there is a *Magnolia grandiflora* and to the east of the drive a magnificent specimen of a *Grevillea robusta*. The sunroom faces east and once had a scenic view over the terraces down to the Yarra River. Unfortunately, the mature trees on the terraces now obscure this view.

A 1902 MMBW map shows the beginning of steps, later extended, down the three terraces, but exactly when the three magnificent rock walls were built is uncertain. They were either made while the McKeanes were on their lengthy honeymoon or immediately after they returned in 1908. Built from volcanic rock they follow the contours of the slope and are in good condition.

The smaller, original shrubs on the terraces have disappeared and unfortunately there is now a jungle of *Hedera* sp., *Vinca major*, *Pittosporum undulatum*, *Tecoma* sp. and *Tradescantia fluminensis*. However some interesting plants such as *Jacaranda mimosifolia*, *Corynocarpus laevigata* (New Zealand Laurel), *Brachychiton acerifolia*, *Raphiolepis indica* (Indian hawthorn), *Laurus nobilis*, *Fraxinus* sp. and *Crataegus* sp. still survive. Scattered around the terraces are six remnant *Trachycarpus fortunei* (Chusau Palm) and all but one are in good condition. Along the lowest terrace a *Malus* sp. and

a *Michelia figo* (Port wine magnolia) can be found.

At the bottom of the terraces is a wonderful, old and twisted weeping elm (*Ulmus glabra* 'Pendula'). According to the 1902 MMBW map this area was originally lawn and it is possibly where the croquet lawn was located. The weeping elm was probably a feature tree but unfortunately it is now squashed in between the end of the terraces and the school's netball court. Thus it is isolated and has lost its purpose.

Tay Creggan's tennis court appears to have had an east/west orientation, where the present school oval lies to-day, and was enclosed by a fence surrounded with shrubs. The pictures taken before the 1930s show a *Phoenix canariensis* in the tennis court area. Running along the southern side of the tennis court was a pergola covered with flowering vines. It divided the main garden from the vegetable garden.<sup>3</sup>

Alfred McKean, Mrs Spencer's second husband, was a keen vegetable gardener who grew asparagus, strawberries, cabbage and other vegetables. There were Chinese market gardens along this stretch of the Yarra River and Alfred's son, Jack, remembers the Chinese giving his father advice on how to keep celery white by growing it in a sewage pipe.

There were very few fruit trees on the property: only a *Diospyros* sp. (Persimmon) and a *Pyrus* sp. The pear tree still grows at the far end of the western boundary. It appears to be in surprisingly good health, considering it has had little recent attention.

Tay Creggan is a special house and garden and is one of the best extant examples of the picturesque Elizabethan Revival style. It deserves a more thorough investigation which may reveal who designed the garden. Any documentary or illustrative material would greatly assist in assembling a more accurate interpretation for the projected Conservation Analysis and Management Plan.

The site is presently used by Strathcona Baptist Grammar School as a campus for Year 9 students who obviously enjoy a year in an environment which stimulates their imagination and gives them a pride in place. After school hours and at the weekend the magnificent hall is used for receptions.

Any further information or recollections which readers may have about the Tay Creggan garden would be welcome additions to the Strathcona archives.



Sandra Pullman is a student in the Bachelor of Applied Science (Horticulture) at Burnley College campus of Melbourne University. She is a keen member of AGHS and of the 'Friends of Burnley Gardens'.

- 1 Internet: [www.NattrusL.com.au](http://www.NattrusL.com.au)
- 2 Tay Creggan Committee (1993), *100 Years of Memories* Strathcona Baptist Grammar School, 30 Yarra Street, Hawthorn
- 3 As above

Prior to the 1930s a pergola divided the main garden from the vegetable garden

Photo: from Strathcona school archives by courtesy Mrs Dianne Little

Tay Creggan will be visited during the 2001 National Conference



# On Tour

## GLIMPSES of the CASTLEMAINE GOLDFIELDS

**'YOU WILL BE EXCITED, ENTHRALLED  
AND CHALLENGED I PROMISE YOU.'**

Thus began a wonderful weekend for thirty participants on a self-drive discovery week-end in Central Victoria. **by Tom and Christobel Comerford**



top: The potager, 'Forest Hall'

centre: At 'Forest Hall'

bottom: Site of the Cremorne  
Pleasure Gardens at Chewton

Our leader was Kevin Walsh, a Castlemaine resident and well-known horticulturist, garden writer and conservationist.

At the Malmsbury Botanical Gardens, rejuvenated in accordance with a 1984 master plan, Kevin shared his deep knowledge of many of the trees and his involvement in developing the *Arbutus* spp. collection. We learnt very quickly that his signature tree is *Arbutus x andrachnoides*. Over the weekend he introduced us to other specimens of this lovely tree, notably at the Castlemaine Cemetery at Campbell's Creek.

At Chewton we saw the remains of the Cremorne Pleasure Gardens where once a grotto, a 'smoking arbour' and an open air dance floor had provided entertainment for gold-miners and their families. The most significant feature was a magnificent English oak (*Quercus robur*), the largest known tree of this species in Victoria. In wonderful condition and still growing well, it is estimated to be more than 140 years old. In Burnett Road, Castlemaine, we heard about the Hirschi and the Lenne Pleasure Gardens, and Rowe's Windsor Gardens where the attraction was 'mountains of strawberries and rivers of cream'.

Throughout the weekend, issues and challenges were raised as we drove from site to site. At Tute's Cottage in Castlemaine, 'a miner's right' claim, historian Robyn Annear explained that the site has remained virtually untouched since the goldmining days. Within its boundary are remnants of the original garden layout. Archeologist David Bannear outlined a proposal to reinstate this garden using plants still found growing on early goldfields sites. If this becomes a place for future AGHS working bees, it would make a great contrast with the garden at 'Buda'.

A most intriguing site was at Winter's Flat where there is a remnant planting of fourteen Valonian

Oaks (*Quercus macrolepis*). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Valonian oak was an important commercial tree, the cups of the acorn being rich in tannin used for the tanning process. In 1879 Mr George Cunnack, who owned the local tannery, successfully planted the Valonian acorns that had come from England in a Wardian case. Many of us gathered acorns as a memento of our weekend. Perhaps we too should invest in a Wardian case to ensure their germination!

The four private gardens we visited, 'Forest Hall', 'Pine Hill', 'Casauria' and 'Longknoll', presented amazing contrasts, although all faced the challenges associated with gardening in central Victoria with its seasonal extremes and generally poor soils. We admired the individual garden designs and plantings. There was much note-taking and doubtless many *Koelreuteria* will appear in gardens, inspired by Michael Wright's work at 'Casauria', once the nurses' home of Castlemaine Hospital.

On Saturday evening, following a twilight tour of the 'Buda' gardens led by the head gardener, Dianne Thomson, we shared 'a Tiscan feast of rustic treats' (and much garden talk) with the 'Friends of Buda'.

Next day, in the Castlemaine Botanical Gardens we saw wonderful examples of *Quercus* spp., splendid conifers like the Soledad pine (*Pinus torreyana*) and a growing (in both senses of the word) collection of *Buddleia* spp. A passionate parks and gardens conservationist, Kevin shared his concerns for the future of many of the trees. Natural ageing, deterioration due to soil compaction and inappropriate management practices are some of the challenges to be faced.

The sites visited in the afternoon were fascinating. The Pennyweight Flat Children's Cemetery is immensely moving with its tiny graves outlined with stones, a few crudely etched with a child's name. At least 200 children are buried in this sensitively managed cemetery on the stony, desolate hilltop overlooking the one time alluvial goldfield. In the Welsh Mining Village, an archaeological site deep within the dry, stony bush beyond Castlemaine, we saw the remains of 14 dwellings, a church, a dam and numerous mineshafts. A few exotic plantings have survived and outlines of the original gardens are visible.

Altogether we had enjoyed only a glimpse of the area. But the goldfields of Castlemaine had come alive for us and, as promised, we had indeed been excited, enthralled and challenged. Our thanks go to all associated with the preparation and conduct of the weekend.

Tom and Christobel Comerford live at Elphinstone in central Victoria and have a great interest in heritage roses assisting in the recording of old roses found in local cemeteries.

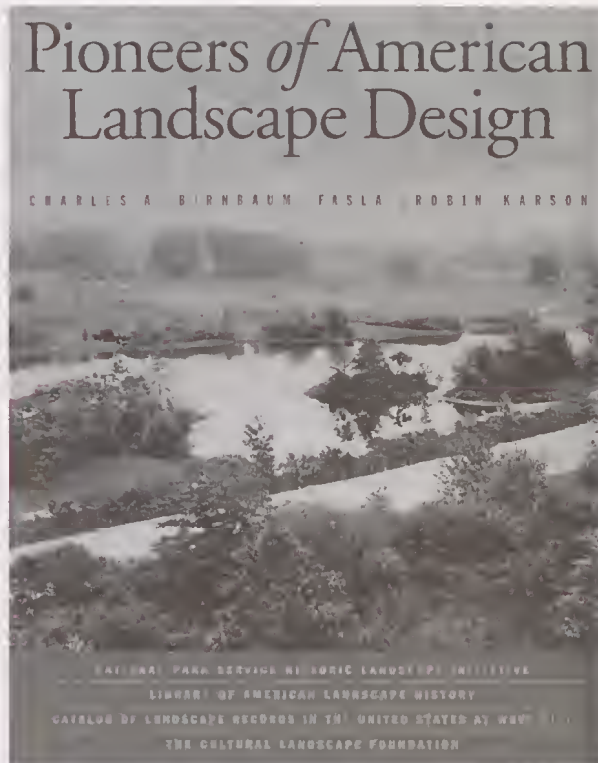


Produced in association with the National Park Service Historic Landscape Initiative, the Library of American Landscape History, the Catalogue of Landscape Records in the United States at Wave Hill and the Cultural Landscape Foundation this book is an essential reference tool for any serious student of garden history.

It contains biographical entries for 160 men and women considered by the editorial team and their sponsoring agencies to be significant pioneers in American landscape design. For Australian readers this is an area that has long been poorly covered although some may know a few recent biographical books such as those on Florence Yoch and Ellen Biddle Shipman.

The cross section of work included covers urban planners, highway and national park planners as well as residential and academic landscape designers. With such a broad scope there are quite a few people listed who are unknown here, and scarcely known even in the USA. One of the most fascinating is Benjamin Banneker (1731 – 1806) an Afro-American surveyor who was largely responsible for the layout of Washington DC after Pierre Charles L'Enfant was dismissed as planner by George Washington.

Each entry is followed by an annotated bibliography that fills out the reference sources most highly regarded by the editorial team.



*Pioneers of American Landscape Design* (eds.)  
Charles A Birnbaum and Robin Karson,  
McGraw-Hill, New York, 2000  
Approx \$120.00

The book is well illustrated with numerous black and white pictures throughout, and a good selection of coloured photographs.

Review by TREVOR NOTTLE

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Membership benefits: subscription to the Society's official journal, *Australian Garden History*, six times a year; garden related seminars, lectures, garden visits and specialist tours; opportunity to attend annual conference and conference tour; contributing to the preservation of historic gardens for posterity.

AGHS Office, Royal Botanic Gardens, Birdwood Avenue, South Yarra, Vic. 3141

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THIS FORM CAN BE PHOTOCOPIED SO THAT THE JOURNAL CAN BE RETAINED INTACT



## ACTION

### QUEENSLAND

The Queensland Branch Committee is preparing a grant application to fund a Conservation Survey of Gracemere Homestead, near Rockhampton.

### MELBOURNE

In the Alexandra Gardens, Melbourne

The City of Melbourne proposes to reinstate the path system around the Star Bed in the Alexandra Gardens. The Victorian Branch has been requesting this for some time.

Helping Trees by Discouraging Car Parking at Yarra Park

In recent years the Victorian Branch of AGHS has written letters to the City of Melbourne to encourage a reduction in the degradation of Yarra Park which Governor Charles La Trobe set aside as public park land in the 1850s. Last year the Melbourne City Council reduced the number of car spaces from 6200 to 5700 and this resulted in some improvement to the health of the trees from less soil

compaction. It is hoped a recent announcement that the fee for car parking in Yarra Park is to increase from \$5.50 to \$7 will discourage football patrons from using this area for parking and further assist the restoration of Yarra Park to its original condition.

### YASS

Garden Documentation in Yass

The ACT, Monaro and Riverina Branch is undertaking the documentation of the garden at 'Fifield' a very early home in the Yass region, now on the fringes of Yass township. The aim is to produce a further book in the series on historic gardens of the region. Trisha Dixon is coordinating the project with involvement from Judith Baskin, Victor Crittenden, Maura O'Connor and Gabrielle Tryon.

Help for Victoria Park, Yass

Victoria Park, established in the mid-nineteenth century has as its core a

series of formal tree plantings. Over the last 150 years there have been many encroachments on the park - such as a high school, a swimming pool and a skate ramp. The ACT, Monaro and Riverina Branch suggested an initial management plan to care for the trees and control the invasion of Robinia, Acacia and Boxthorn. The Yass Shire Council welcomed the interest of AGHS.

### CANBERRA

A Watching Brief on Changes in Ainslie and Reid

The ACT, Monaro and Riverina Branch is actively keeping an eye on proposed variations to the plans for management of the inner areas of Ainslie and Reid in the ACT. Increasing in-fill development is slowly changing the character of these important exemplars of the garden city philosophy and design underlying the planning of Canberra.

## MAILBOX

### CHINESE MARKET GARDENS

Many readers wrote to give information about Chinese market gardens. Here are some extracts and information from their letters.

Mrs R.N. Howard of Malvern, Victoria wrote:

*In 1919 when I was seven, my mother and I spent nearly a year in Sackville Street, [Kew] with relatives. Each day I walked alone across Sackville Street, up John Street and across Cotham Road to Woodbury College. It must have been where St Georges Hospital or Genazzano are now. Most of the city side of John Street was a large Chinese vegetable garden. At first I was scared of them and used to cross the street - later I got quite friendly with them and one day was given a kitten.*

*Later we moved to Malvern where a 'vegie John' and a 'fish John' used to deliver several times a week in their horse and cart. The 'vegie John' frequently gave me a ride. At Christmas we were always given a jar of ginger. I still have one of the jars.*

Stuart Read advised that the New South Wales Heritage Branch has recently added material about Chinese market gardens to its web-site.

From Trevor Nottle in South Australia: "There are references to Chinese market gardeners operating near Laura in the mid-north of South Australia and also at a place called China-mans Well on the escarpment of the Flinders Ranges south-east of Port Augusta. These are found as I recall in Rob Swinbourne's book *Years of Endeavour* but it could be in his MS *Lost*

*Gardens* (given to the SA Branch of AGHS) . . ."

Glenn Cooke from Brisbane spoke of research being done on Chinese market gardens in Ipswich, Queensland.

Oline Richards in Perth has gathered material on the Chinese market gardens in that city and is writing about them.

### OLDBURY

Mrs Caroline Simpson has confirmed Stuart Read's belief that there was an earlier driveway at right angles to the current driveway at 'Oldbury' [Vol. 12. (5) p. 21]. She explained that it joined up with the neighbouring property of 'Mereworth' which at the time the Atkinsons of 'Oldbury' built, was owned by James Atkinson's brother. Hence there was a direct link between estates.



# CALENDAR of EVENTS

## MAY

6 Sun

*ACT, Monaro and Riverina Branch*  
Visit by 'the Old Mole' Lectures and Garden Tool Demonstrations in the Vegetable Garden at 'Lanyon' from 2-4 p.m. Further information from Lani Lawson at 'Lanyon'

12 Sat.

*Queensland, Brisbane Walking Tour* of Clayfield Participants can enjoy the antique and garden shops before meeting at 12 noon for lunch at Cluedos (BYO), Clayfield Centre, 742 Sandgate Road, Clayfield. After lunch a walk through parts of Clayfield ending at the home of Gillian Elliott, 87 Oriel Road for afternoon tea. Gillian is a longstanding member of AGHS Queensland and her garden has been included in the Open Gardens Scheme. Wendy Lees (evenings) 3289 0280

20 Sun.

*Tasmania, Midlands Bulb Afternoon*  
A visit to Mr and Mrs Radcliff's property where a talk on bulb breeding will be given, followed by a further garden visit and presentation in the afternoon. Deidre Pearson 6225 3081

20 Sun.

*Western Australia, Perth Tour* of Grounds of Murdoch University with Marion Blackwell Meet 2.00 p.m. at southern end of Bush Court, Murdoch University, South Street, Murdoch

26 Sat.

*Victoria, Birregurra Working Bee* – Turkeith Helen Page (03) 9397 2260

27 Sun

*Victoria, Birregurra Working Bee* – Mooleric Helen Page (03) 9397 2260

## JUNE

6 Wed.

*Sydney Garden History Research Forum* 6.30 – 8.30 p.m. Annie Wyatt Room, National Trust Centre, Observatory Hill. Refreshments will be served. AGHS Members \$ 8, Non-members \$ 10. The evening offers something different for all members, friends and students of garden history. Expressions of interest are invited for participating in this event where members can 'show and tell' about individual projects they are researching or a project they have completed. Presentations will be limited to a maximum of ten minutes duration.

15-17 Fri. to Sun.

*Victoria, Geelong 'Bunce, Bunyas and Beyond' Conference* of the Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens (Victoria) hosted by the Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens. It will mark the 150th anniversary of the Geelong Botanic Gardens and will coincide with an exhibition of botanic art at the Geelong Art Gallery. Jane Salmon 03 5243 5904 or Annie McGeachy 03 5243 7728

23 Sat.

*Queensland, Brisbane* Dr Jeannie Sim will give a talk on 'The Federation Garden' at the Queensland Art Gallery Lecture Theatre at 2.00 p.m.

24 Sun.

*Tasmania, Midlands Rose Pruning Workshop* Susan Irvine will lead the workshop and demonstration

## JULY

31 Tues.

*Sydney Annual General Meeting* 6.30 p.m. for 6.45 p.m. Guest Speaker: Howard Tanner, 'Cazneaux's 1920s & 1930s Records of Sydney – Places, Houses and Gardens' Bookings: Malcolm Wilson on 9810 7803

## ONLINE

Web-sites for historic gardens in the United States offer clear and readable information and attractive pictures. AGHS members might like to visit the following sites.

[www.mountvernon.org](http://www.mountvernon.org)

A visit to George Washington's plantation overlooking the Potomac River in Virginia will introduce you to life in colonial America and describe the garden of America's first president.

[www.monticello.org](http://www.monticello.org)

A delightful insight into the life, interests and personality of Thomas Jefferson, an enthusiastic and knowledgeable gardener.

[www.doaks.org](http://www.doaks.org)

A double benefit: enjoy a visit to Dumbarton Oaks, the wonderful garden in Washington D.C. designed by Beatrix Farrands for the philanthropists George and Mary Bliss, and become acquainted with a great library. Dumbarton Oaks, under the aegis of Harvard University, is a world-renowned centre for medieval and Byzantine studies and for Landscape Design. The web-site accesses the library catalogue where the page devoted to new acquisitions is a superb resource for recent publications and the latest research in specialised areas of garden history.

[www.oldhousegardens.com](http://www.oldhousegardens.com)

Scott Kunst of Ann Arbor, Michigan responded to our web-site. After teaching American landscape history for many years, Scott launched a small mail-order catalogue specialising in historic flower bulbs. The web-site (or e-mail [OHGBulbs@aol.com](mailto:OHGBulbs@aol.com)) will put bulb enthusiasts in touch with Scott whose site offers specialist links. Horticulturists and species specialists will appreciate these.



## FROM THE NATIONAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

### BENEFITS FOR MEMBERS

The National Management Committee is pleased to announce new partnerships bringing extra benefits to members of the Australian Garden History Society. The NMC has forged an association with *The Green Book Company* and *Ross Roses*.

*The Green Book Company* is a mail order business specialising in gardening books. It is a small family business owned by Sue Forge with access to thousands of titles. Sue and her husband Warwick have been supporters of the AGHS since its foundation. *The Green Book Company* is offering a 10% discount off the RRP on all mail order purchases to AGHS members. For a current catalogue phone 03 9818 2801 or toll free 1800 646 533. The fax contact is 03 9818 1862 and the e-mail address is [melinda@greenbook.com.au](mailto:melinda@greenbook.com.au)

*Ross Roses* at Willunga in South Australia have been rose growers since 1902 and have over 500 rose varieties for sale. The company is offering a 10% discount off the RRP on all mail order purchases to AGHS members and on over the counter sales for South Australian members. Further, the company has agreed to supply roses at a 15% discount for AGHS garden restoration projects. A copy of the 2001 *Ross Roses* Catalogue is enclosed with this journal.

Purchases from these two companies will also benefit the Society. Members will need to quote their membership number to attract a discount.

### NATIONAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE ELECTIONS

At the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Australian Garden History Society, to be held in Melbourne in October this year, there will be five vacancies on the National Management Committee.

Virginia Berger, Nicky Downer and Jan Gluskie, having served the maximum term of six years, must retire from the committee. Richard Heathcote and Katie Holmes who have served one term of three years need to stand down but may choose to renominate.

Elections offer an opportunity for members to participate in the management of the Society. Each year the National Management Committee holds 3 face-to-face, full-day meetings in February (Melbourne), in June (Sydney) and prior to the national conference. These meetings are interspersed with 3 one-hour telephone link-up meetings in April, August and December.

Elected members serve for a 3-year term and are eligible for re-election for a maximum of one additional term. An allowance to alleviate travel costs for the meetings in Sydney and Melbourne is available if required.

Nominations open on 5 August and close on 14 September. To obtain a nomination form contact Jackie Courmadias on 03 9650 5043 or Toll Free 1800 678 446.

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PROFILE:

# Winifred Waddell

CONSERVATIONIST

THE NAME WINIFRED WADDELL is surprisingly little known in the wider community.

Those who do recognise her name fall into three groups - the students to whom she taught mathematics either at Melbourne Church of England Girls' Grammar School, or at Trinity College in the University of Melbourne; fellow members of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria, or of The Native Plants Preservation Society of Victoria, and the journalists who knew her as a columnist in 'The Junior Age' from 1960 to 1964.

Born in Carlisle, England in 1884 Winifred Waddell arrived in Australia after completing a B.Sc. at London University. She quickly took every opportunity to know the Australian bush and its flora, enjoying riding and bushwalking in the Victorian High Plains.

She became an active and respected member of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria and in 1949 formed the Wild Flower Preservation Group. Within three years this group became autonomous as the Native Plants Preservation Society and Winifred Waddell devoted her considerable ability and energy to its development.

Not only did she initiate the establishment of wildflower sanctuaries throughout Victoria but, realising the importance of education, at 76 she began writing *Bushland Notes* for 'The Junior Age' and she made sure the State Education Department knew of her concern over the destruction of bushland areas around Melbourne and the consequent decrease in native flora.

Jean Galbraith edited *Wildflower Diary*<sup>1</sup>, the collection of Winifred's 'Junior Age' articles which was published 4 years after her death. The two women had shared many interests and it was Winifred who first suggested Jean's seminal work *Wildflowers of Victoria*.

*Wildflower Diary* sets out in a simple and straightforward fashion to stimulate interest in Victoria's native flowers by alerting young people

to their seasonal appearance. Much of the content is still timely.

'... but garden escapees are formidable. The worst in Victoria is the South African Boneseed, *Chrysanthemoides*. This is a heavy-looking shrub with rather thick bright-green leaves and yellow daisy flowers.

It has already destroyed the Australian character of much of the You Yangs and Arthur's Seat, and is spreading dangerously along our foreshores.'<sup>2</sup>

The book is still relevant and informative for those who enjoy bushwalking but are grateful for a reminder of what is to be seen. The words are never patronising, nor does the author talk down to children, yet it is always simple to read.

'There are many greenhoods. Some have large hoods, some have small, some are long-tailed, some short. Some have the hoods closed by two up-turned sepals - some have sepals turned down so the flower, though hooded, is open. Some have always one flower, others have several, but there is only one species which nods its single head down so that the back of the hood is parallel to the ground. It is well-named Nodding Greenhood.'<sup>3</sup>

An interesting tribute to Miss Waddell came from Miss Valentine Leeper<sup>4</sup> an intensely patriotic Australian born in 1900. She was a teaching colleague of Winifred Waddell. When asked her impression of Miss Waddell she commented: 'She was one of the Englishwomen who was a success at the school, although she did have nicotine stains on her fingers.'<sup>5</sup>



top left: From the cover of *Wildflower Diary* illustrated by Elizabeth Cochrane

above: Miss Winifred Waddell  
Photo: MGGS archives

1 Jean Galbraith (ed.) *Wildflower Diary Winifred Waddell*  
The Native Plants Preservation Society of Victoria (1976)

2 As above p.19 'Our Bushland Enemies'

3 As above p.35 'The First Nodding Greenhoods'

4 Valentine Leeper was the daughter of Dr Alexander Leeper,  
first warden of Trinity College, Melbourne

5 Valentine Leeper in correspondence with the author.





# Growing HISTORY

OVER THE NEXT TWO YEARS, Melbourne Girls Grammar will create a History Garden on the school premises in Anderson Street, South Yarra. The genesis of the idea arose two years ago when the History Department sought to enhance the learning experience of Year 10 students exploring World War I.

by Rosslyn McCarthy

William Tibbits 'Yarra House,  
South Yarra' [c. 1884]  
Watercolour 38 x 59 cms  
Private collection

The entry for 'Yarra House' in  
the catalogue of the 1984  
Tibbits exhibition, *Portraits in  
the Landscape*, reads in part  
'... The house is a substantial  
brick building set on a  
bluestone base.  
No information relating  
to it has been found.'

Rosslyn McCarthy's History  
Garden is on the site  
of the garden shown  
in the Tibbits painting.

We planted Flanders Poppies soon after ANZAC Day to be cut in November for Remembrance Day. On a chilly morning, while a music group played *Abide with Me* and the poem *In Flanders Fields* was read aloud, the girls assembled on the Library Roof Garden to plant their seedlings. Attention remained focussed on the poppies as they grew and blossomed into a mass of fluttering scarlet heads. Mercifully, despite the growing heat, the last of them survived to the required date in November, although the final ceremony needed a little artificial help.

It was a simple class activity. Yet the manner in which this small bed of poppies planted in a Melbourne school in 1999 had connected the girls with the experience of the young men fighting on the Western Front eighty years earlier was so striking it inspired a larger project. This was to create a History Garden that would involve students in its establishment and maintenance. It would help them explore other eras and societies and the experiences of those who lived in earlier times.

It became clear this was to be more than a garden of symbolic plantings. It would be an extension of the History curriculum and also link to other school activities and interests. Thus the garden needed to evoke a sense of time and place connoting some of the myriad values, beliefs, and feelings of past societies and eras. This approach already underlay a year 9 course where students worked as a group, reminiscent of craftsmen in a medieval workshop, to recreate simplified versions

of works such as the Bayeux Tapestry or Books of Hours.

Given the limited space available, an L-shaped corner site facing inwards to a lawn area and bordered by the century-old brick perimeter wall of the School, we decided on a garden in three sections.

An Australian section, the first to be developed, will reflect the interaction of aborigines and Europeans. Here, one area will represent indigenous Australia, and another will show Australia and its achievements since white settlement. Various features may be added or changed over time, but currently the main themes are Reconciliation and Federation.

In the corner of the main site the second section will give the hint of a Classical garden, drawing its inspiration from evidence such as wall paintings from Pompeii, and linked not only to History but to Latin and Classical Studies which are still strong in the School.

The third section will provide glimpses of medieval life and an understanding of the uses of medieval gardens. After considering various types of medieval garden we favoured a small herbar based on the description written by Albertus Magnus (c. 1260) and discussed in *The Medieval Garden* by Sylvia Landsberg. This will be divided into a turfed area to suggest a pleasure garden for a noble lady, and an area holding raised beds containing some flowers, vegetables and medicinal herbs, and a few fruit trees.

We hope to hold some lessons in the quiet garden space, stepping back in time from the rushed life of the twenty-first century. At other times the students will help with the planting and maintenance of the area exploring the uses and symbolic meanings of medieval plants, and learning about daily work at that time.

Rosslyn McCarthy is Head  
of the History Department  
at Melbourne Girls  
Grammar School.  
With Marjorie Theobald  
she edited *Melbourne Girls  
Grammar School: Centenary  
Essays 1893-1993*. She is  
recognised for her creative  
approach in teaching history  
and cultural studies.